

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
“Liftoff: Unleashing Innovation in Satellite Communications  
Technologies.”  
February 8, 2023**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**U.S. Leadership**

Today, we will discuss solutions to unleash innovation in the satellite communications marketplace.

Last week, we heard from witnesses about how satellite systems will play a role in closing the digital divide...

...how they will connect Americans in times of disaster and emergencies...

...and how they will enable the technologies of the future to beat China.

Technologies like precision agriculture, which is valuable for farmers in Eastern Washington working to improve their yields and lower their costs.

Streamlining federal regulations to enable technology that helps put food on the table is why efforts like my Satellite and Telecommunication's Streamlining Act are so important.

We also heard from witnesses about the threat that China and others pose to our economic and national security if we do not take action.

These hearings could not be more timely...

...with the Chinese Communist Party illegally launching a balloon over the continental United States...

...and spying on American assets and citizens.

This experience was a frightening reminder of the need to secure our networks from the Chinese Communist Party, both terrestrially and in satellite communications.

China will stop at nothing to undermine American values...

...steal American data...

...and use that information to advance its authoritarian agenda around the world.

We cannot let that happen. I am pleased to have the witnesses before us who can speak to the five bipartisan bills we are considering to encourage investment...

...innovation, and competition in the satellite communications industry...

...to solidify America's dominance in this sector.

## **Satellite and Telecommunications Streamlining Act**

Last Congress, I introduced the Satellite and Telecommunications Streamlining Act with Ranking Member Pallone.

Today, we are considering that language as a discussion draft as we continue to work with industry and government stakeholders to make sure we get it right.

This is the first major legislative effort since 2000 to update our laws and regulations related to how satellite systems are licensed in the United States.

My legislation would reform the Federal Communications Commission's process to grant satellite licenses...

...establish a statutory framework that directs the FCC to act swiftly to approve satellite license applications...

...and incentivize operators to be responsible stewards of space and spectrum in a global marketplace.

We heard repeatedly at last week's hearing about the need for our government to move quickly to stay relevant.

In order for U.S. companies to compete globally, they must move first.

They must be incentivized to design their systems to better serve the unconnected: whether in America, or in developing countries that the Chinese Communist Party seeks to dominate.

Thank you, Ranking Member Pallone, for working with me on this legislation.

## **Secure Space Act**

We are also reviewing Ranking Member Pallone's Secure Space Act, a bill that I am proud to co-lead.

This bill builds on the Energy and Commerce Committee's leadership to make sure untrusted equipment

and software is removed from American communications networks.

In 2020, President Trump signed the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act, which prohibits federal subsidies from being used for untrusted equipment...

...and authorized a grant program at the FCC for carriers to remove that equipment from their networks.

That grant program is short by \$3 billion, and we are working with our colleagues across Congress to fund that shortfall as soon as possible.

With China flying reconnaissance balloons over our land, the timing could not be more urgent.

Additionally, last year, Congress passed the Secure Equipment Act to close a loophole that allowed vulnerable equipment to remain in our networks...

...regardless of whether it was federally funded or not.

The Secure Space Act would expand this work by applying similar requirements to our satellite communications technologies.

By prohibiting the FCC from granting authorization for satellite services that pose a national security risk, we will not allow risky businesses to serve the United States.

## **Closing**

Now is the time to act and plow the hard ground on this Committee.

I am pleased to see members across the subcommittee working in a bipartisan manner to lead on solutions to solve some of our toughest challenges, including how America can lead and win the future with satellite technologies that improves people's lives.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and I yield back.